



# Farmers Market and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Handbook

Effective January 1, 2016

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services  
Division of Public Assistance  
Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program  
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program  
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Juneau, AK 99801  
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Email: [wic@alaska.gov](mailto:wic@alaska.gov)

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## **A. About the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs**

### **Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) FMNP**

WIC is a federally-funded health and nutrition program for women, infants, and children. WIC helps families by providing food assistance coupons to buy nutritious supplemental foods from WIC-authorized vendors. WIC also provides nutrition education to participants. To qualify for the program, participants must meet the federal income guidelines, be nutritionally at-risk, and be pregnant, new mothers, infants, or children under age five.

### **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)**

Eligible WIC participants may also qualify for Alaska WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) benefits during the Farmers' Market season (June 1 – October 31) each year. Since Farmers' Markets and farmstands are not available in every region of Alaska, WIC FMNP coupons are distributed only to participants who have access to authorized farmer-vendors. Participants receive five (5) \$5 coupons for purchase of fresh, nutritious, Alaskan grown produce from Alaska WIC-authorized farmers' markets.

### **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**

The SFMNP serves eligible senior citizens sixty (60) years of age and older who are nutritionally at-risk, and who meet income and residency guidelines. Senior participants are provided with five (5) \$5 coupons that may be redeemed for fresh, nutritious, Alaskan grown fruit, vegetables, herbs and honey sold by authorized farmers' markets and farmstands during the June 1 – October 31 season.

### **WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs)**

As part of their food benefit, WIC participants in Alaska receive one FVV each month. FVVs may have a range of values and can be used at retail stores or at farmers' markets and/or farmstands.

## **B. Farmer-Vendor and Farmers' Market Eligibility**

Alaska FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs can only be accepted by authorized Farmer-Vendors at designated farmers' markets, farmstand and/or farm locations that have been approved by the State of Alaska WIC Program.

### **Who qualifies for the programs?**

- A farmer who grows at least one-third (33 percent) of the produce s/he offers for sale at a farmers' market, farmstand or farm.
- A farmer whose produce offered for sale is locally grown within Alaska's borders.
- A farmers' market that includes enough authorized farmers participating in the market, or, if a farm or farmstand, provides enough variety and quantity of produce to meet the demand of WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP participants in the area served.

- A farmers' market or farmstand that is open for a minimum of three hours on at least one day every week for the period stated in the Farmer-Vendor Agreement.
- A farmers' market or farmstand that is located in an area that serves enough eligible WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP participants to justify the need for a farmers' market or farmstand.
- A farmers' market or farmstand that is located in an area where the local WIC and/or Senior Agency are able to provide necessary services to administer the programs.
- A farmer who can meet the general program requirements beginning on page 6.

### **Who does not qualify?**

- A wholesale or retail farmer who grows less than 33 percent of the produce s/he sells.
- A farmer who sells only through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or harvest box.
- A farmer who is in violation of other Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) programs such as Food Stamps (also known as SNAP).
- A farmer who is currently disqualified, sanctioned, or under investigation by the WIC or Food Stamp (also known as SNAP) Program.

## **C. Farmer-Vendor Authorization Process**

Farmer-Vendor authorizations are for a three year period beginning June 1 through November 30 of each year. All interested farmers and farmers' markets must submit a new application for each three-year cycle. Applications must be submitted during the open application period from March 1- June 15 each year. Applications submitted outside of the open application period will not be processed.

An application form (Appendix A) and Banking Information Form (Appendix C) for authorization as a Farmer-Vendor under the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are available on the Alaska WIC Program website at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/default.aspx>, or you may request to receive the forms by mail.

### **How to Apply**

- 1) Complete and submit the appropriate application form, banking information form and Farmer-Vendor agreement by mail to the following address:

Division of Public Assistance/WIC  
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program  
PO Box 110612  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

- 2) If your farm/farmstand is authorized, the State Agency will finalize the agreement and return an original copy to you with your start-up package.
- 3) Applications are accepted from March 1 until the deadline of June 15 of the current year. Applications received after June 15<sup>th</sup> will not be processed and will need to be resubmitted the following year.

## Authorization Process

Applications for authorization to accept the FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs are processed within 30 days of receipt by the WIC Program. Applications with missing information will not be processed until the packet is complete.

If your application is denied authorization by the WIC Program, you may not accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FFVs. All applicants that are denied authorization will receive written notification of the denial and the right to an appeal.

If your application is approved by the WIC Program, a Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be sent to you, with the WIC Program Director's countersignature. The Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for all remaining seasons during the three-year cycle. If you have applied during the second or third year of the cycle, the Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for that/those season(s) only.

The WIC Program will mail you a **start-up package** that includes:

- A copy of the fully executed Farmer-Vendor Agreement.
- If a farm or farmstand; a single self-inking stamp with a uniquely assigned Farmer Number. This Farmer Number will be used to identify the farmer in program files, the banking system, and as an identifier at the farm or farmstand. All FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs must be stamped with your Farmer-Vendor stamp prior to presentment for payment.
- This Alaska WIC Program Handbook for the FMNP & SFMNP Programs.
- A WIC Farmers' Market Poster that **must** be displayed prominently at your farm, farmstand and/or market. Posting the sign lets participants know that they can use their FMNP or SFMNP coupons and FVVs at your farm, farmstand or market. Failure to comply may result in sanctions (see page 14).

**IMPORTANT: Do not accept any FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs until you have received your signed Farmer-Vendor Agreement and Farmer-Vendor stamp.**

## General Requirements

The authorized Farmer-Vendor will:

- Accept and redeem WIC, FMNP and SFMNP vouchers and coupons only after you are authorized by the State of Alaska WIC Program.

- Accept vouchers and coupons within the dates of their validity and submit them for payment within the allowable time period established by the State of Alaska.
- For WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs), compare the signature on the voucher to the WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. The signed voucher signature must match an authorized signature listed on the booklet.
- Do not ask to see ID for FVV or FMNP and SFMNP coupons.
- Stamp each transacted FMNP coupon or FVV with a Farmer-Vendor number prior to depositing at your bank. SFMNP coupons must be stamped with the farmer number before redeeming at the assigned payment agency (Appendix G-1, G-2)
- Assure that FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs are accepted only for eligible foods grown within Alaska's borders. See Appendix D for approved foods.
- Provide eligible fruits and vegetables at the current price or less than the current price charged to other customers.
- Accept training on FVV, FMNP, and SFMNP procedures and provide training to farmers and employees with responsibilities for such procedures.
- Be accountable for actions of farmers or employees in coupon and voucher handling and processing.
- Agree to be monitored overtly and covertly and provide access and cooperate with WIC Program representatives when being monitored for compliance with program procedures and requirements.
- Understand that the State of Alaska may deny payment and require reimbursement for any improperly redeemed vouchers or coupons and agree to reimburse the Alaska WIC Program for any coupons transacted in violation of program requirements.
- Comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of USDA regulations:  
*In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.*
- Offer WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP shoppers and/or their proxies the same courtesies as other customers.
- Notify the State Agency within 10 business days if any farmer or farmers' market ceases operation prior to the end of the authorization period.
- Handle the FVVs, FMNP and SFMNP coupons as you do cash. They should be stored in a secure, locked location. Lost or stolen vouchers and coupons will not be replaced or reimbursed.

- Prominently display the WIC Farmers' Market Poster at the point of sale or on your farm stalls so WIC and Senior participants can identify you as an approved Farmer-Vendor.

**The authorized Farmer-Vendor will not:**

- Collect sales tax on purchases paid for by FVV or FMNP and SFMNP benefits.
- Seek restitution from the State of Alaska and/or participants for coupons and/or vouchers not paid by the State of Alaska.
- Claim reimbursement for an amount greater than the face value of the FVV, or FMNP or SFMNP coupon or the actual sale amount.
- Issue cash change for purchases that are in an amount less than the value of the FMNP or SFMNP coupon(s), or FVVs.
- Accept and exchange FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs for cash or other non-approved items or services.
- Charge more or levy a surcharge for participants who use FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs.
- Commit fraud or abuse of the WIC, FMNP, or SFMNP programs.
- Participate in the WIC, FMNP, or SFMNP programs if you are sanctioned or disqualified by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services or debarred by the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons that are canceled, marked VOID, or appear to be reproduced or tampered with.

## **D. Farmers' Market Authorization Process**

A farmers' market must be authorized by the State of Alaska WIC Program before allowing farmers to accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs. The Market Manager agrees to perform the duties as required by the program as described in this Handbook.

Farmers' Market authorizations are for a three year period beginning June 1 through November 30 of each year. All interested farmers' markets must submit a new application for each three-year cycle. Applications must be submitted during the open application period from March 1- June 15 each year. Applications submitted outside of the open application period will not be processed.

An application form (Appendix B) for authorization as a Farmers' Market under the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs is available on the Alaska WIC Program website at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/nutri/FMNP/FMNPVendorInfo.htm>. A program agreement may be provided upon request.



## How to Apply

- 1) Complete and submit the appropriate application form and Farmer-Vendor agreement by mail to the following address:

Division of Public Assistance/WIC  
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program  
PO Box 110612  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

- 2) If your farm/farmstand is authorized, the State Agency will finalize the agreement and return an original copy to you with your start-up package.
- 3) Applications are accepted from March 1 until the deadline of June 15 of the current year. Applications received after June 15<sup>th</sup> will not be processed and will need to be resubmitted the following year.

## Authorization Process

Applications for authorization to accept the FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs are processed within 30 days of receipt by the WIC Program. Applications with missing information will not be processed until the packet is complete. If your application is denied, you will receive written notification of the denial and the right to an appeal.

If your application is approved by the WIC Program, a Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be sent to you, with the WIC Program Director's countersignature. The Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for all remaining seasons during the three-year cycle. If you have applied during the second or third year of the cycle, the Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for that/those season(s) only.

The WIC Program will mail you a **start-up package** that includes:

- A copy of the fully executed Farmer-Vendor Agreement.
- This Alaska WIC Program Handbook for the FMNP & SFMNP Programs.
- A WIC Farmers' Market Poster that **must** be displayed prominently at your farm, farmstand and/or market. Posting the sign lets participants know that they can use their FMNP or SFMNP coupons and FVVs at your farm, farmstand or market. Failure to comply may result in sanctions (see page 14).

**Important Note: Your Farmers' Market vendors may not accept any FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs until you have received your signed Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer**

## FMNP Farmers' Market Requirements

The authorized Farmers' Market Manager will:

- Ensure that the WIC Farmers' Market Poster is prominently posted at all Market Manager information booths and Farmer-Vendor stalls,
- Provide the WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP information and training to farmers requesting authorization to participate in these programs,
- Provide the State Agency with the location and scheduled dates and hours of market operation, and
- Report to the State Agency any alleged or suspected misuse, abuse, fraud, or violation in connection with the FMNP policy and procedures.

## E. Termination of Farmer-Vendor or Farmers' Market Agreement

A Farmer-Vendor may terminate his/her participation in the WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP by giving the WIC Program at least 30 days written advance notice via mail, email or fax. You must remove any WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP materials supplied by the program and return the stamp issued to you to the following address:

**Mail:** Division of Public Assistance/WIC  
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program  
PO Box 110612  
Juneau, Alaska 99811  
**Email:** [wic@alaska.gov](mailto:wic@alaska.gov)  
**Fax:** (907) 465-3416

Upon termination of the Vendor Agreement, all FMNP coupons and FVVs must be deposited in the bank within 15 days. SFMNP coupons must be mailed to the payment agency within 15 days.

## F. Approved Food List

The fruits and vegetables that are approved for purchase by WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP participants are also called eligible foods. See Appendix D for a complete list of approved foods.

There are some distinctions between the fruits and vegetables that are eligible for purchase with FMNP and SFMNP coupons and the eligible foods for FVVs. This can cause confusion for participants and for farmers' and farmers' market employees. We recognize that farmstands and market stalls frequently do business at a brisk pace and need to keep the customers flowing. We strongly recommend that you familiarize yourself with the Approved Food List, and keep a copy with every cash box for quick reference.

Generally, for FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs, the following rules apply:

Allowed:

- WIC-approved fruits and vegetables (without added sugars or oils)
- Fruits and vegetables that are not processed or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes.

Not allowed:

- Baked goods.
- Meats, seafood, eggs, or dairy products.
- Dried fruits and vegetables, fruit leathers or fruit roll-ups.
- Ornamental corn or gourds.
- Nuts or seeds.

**Table 1: Coupons & Vouchers – What’s Different?**

<b>FMNP or SFMNP Coupons</b>	<b>Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs)</b>
Fruit or vegetable item must be locally grown (within Alaska’s borders)	Fruit or vegetable item must be locally grown (within Alaska’s borders)
Allows only fresh fruits, vegetables, and fresh-cut herbs.	Allows fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.
Allows white potatoes	Does not allow white potatoes
Allows fresh-cut herbs	Does not allow fresh-cut herbs or spices.
Can be used at authorized Farmstand or Farmers’ Market only	Can be used at authorized Farmstand, Farmer’s Market, or grocery store.

## **G. Accepting FMNP and SFMNP Coupons**

All FMNP/SFMNP coupons and FVVs must be handled like cash; lost or stolen coupons or vouchers will not be replaced or reimbursed. If you suspect abuse, please report it to the State Agency via email, mail or fax.

**Mail:** Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program  
Division of Public Assistance/WIC  
PO Box 110612  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

**Email:** [wic@alaska.gov](mailto:wic@alaska.gov)  
**Fax:** (907) 465-3416

**DOs:**

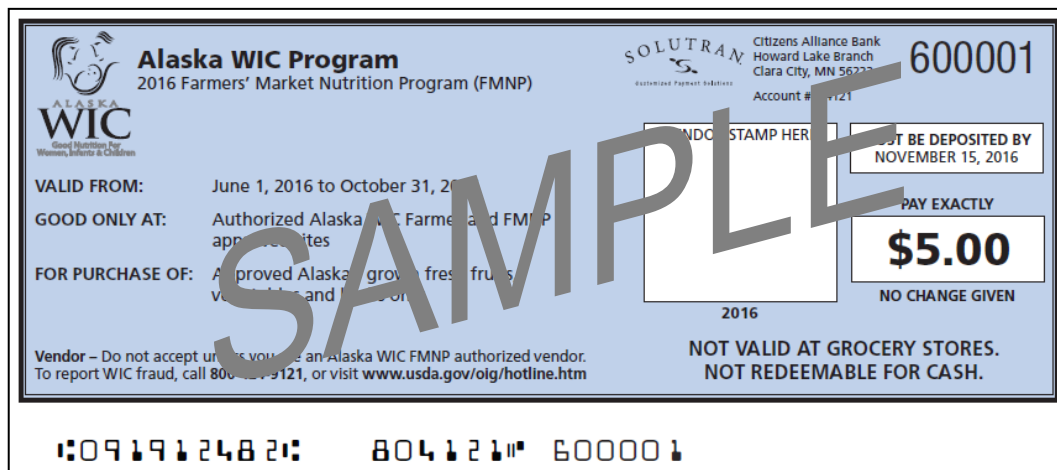
- Do accept FMNP and SFMNP coupons only within the valid market dates of June 1 – October 31 of the current year.
- Do accept FVVs only within the specific valid dates listed on the voucher.
- Do allow participants to combine multiple FMNP or SFMNP coupons and FVVs in a single transaction.
- Do offer to add produce to equal the amount of the coupon if a purchase is less than the value of the coupon(s).

## DO NOTs:

- Do not accept coupons tendered outside of the valid market dates.
- Do not give change for a coupon.
- Do not charge or collect sales tax on the value of the coupons presented. You may collect sales tax on the amount of the purchase that exceeds the value of the coupons.

## FMNP Coupons

WIC Local Agencies distribute FMNP coupons worth \$5 each to eligible WIC participants during the Farmers' Market season. Participants receive five coupons, for a total of \$25. Multiple coupons may be used in a single transaction.

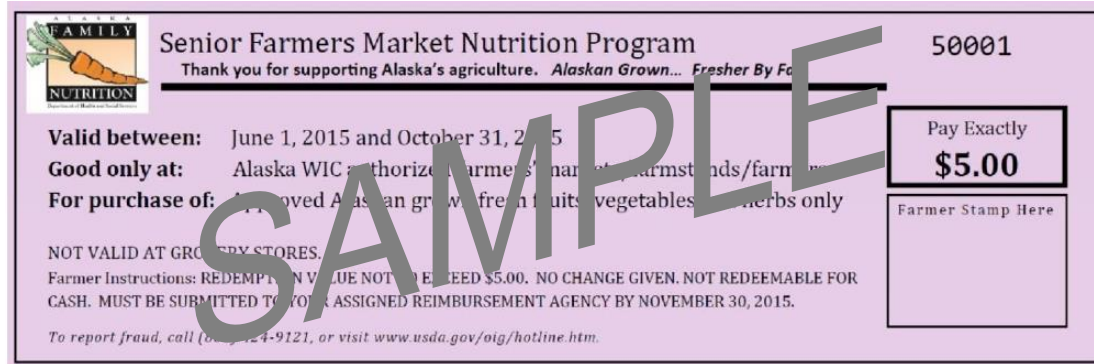


### FMNP Coupon Handling Process

- 1) Stamp your Farmer-Vendor number in the box marked "Vendor Stamp Here". Handwritten or missing stamps will cause the coupon to be rejected. *Bank rejection fees will not be reimbursed under any circumstances.*
- 2) Deposit all FMNP coupons in your bank before **November 15** of the current year.

## SFMNP Coupons

Authorized distribution agencies provide SFMNP coupons worth \$5 each to eligible senior participants during the Farmers' Market season. Participants receive five coupons, for a total of \$25. Multiple coupons may be used in a single transaction.



### SFMNP Handling Process

- 1) Stamp your Farmer-Vendor number in the box marked “Farmer Stamp Here”. Handwritten or missing stamps will cause the coupon to be rejected. *Bank rejection fees will not be reimbursed under any circumstances.*
- 2) Mail all collected SFMNP coupons with the appropriate SFMNP Coupon Reimbursement Form (see Appendix G-1 or G-2). Coupons received after November 30<sup>th</sup> of the current year will not be reimbursed. Do not wait until the end of the season to submit SFMNP coupons for redemption. The two reimbursement agencies are listed here. Please contact the State of Alaska WIC Program at (907) 465-3100 or email [wic@alaska.gov](mailto:wic@alaska.gov) for your assigned agency.

United Way of Mat-Su  
550 S. Alaska Street, Suite 205  
Palmer, AK 99645  
(907) 745-5824

North Star Council on Aging  
1424 Moore Street  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
(907) 421-9974

- 3) All reimbursements of SFMNP coupons will be processed no later than December 31 of the current year. SFMNP coupons received after November 30<sup>th</sup> of the current year will not be reimbursed.

## H. Accepting Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVV)

Program rules for accepting FVV are more complex than the rules for FMNP and SFMNP coupons. It is important to learn and follow the rules to ensure that FVV will be reimbursed.

### DOs:

- Do allow FVV to be combined with FMNP coupons in a transaction.
- Do add produce to equal the full value of the voucher, if the purchase is less than the amount printed on the FVV.
- Do allow the participant to pay the difference using her/his own funds, if the purchase is more than the amount printed on the voucher.
- Do compare the participant or proxy's signature with the WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. If a proxy is shopping for the participant, their signature must appear on the food list as one of the Authorized Representative/Proxy Signatures.

**WIC Approved Food List/ Participant ID Folder:**



### DO NOTs:

- **Do not charge or collect sales tax for a purchase up to the value of an FVV. Payment for the excess portion of a sale over the amount of the FVV can be subject to any applicable sales tax.**
- **Do not accept FVVs after October 31 of the current year.**
- **Do not ask for the participant or proxy's driver's license or picture ID.**

The Alaska WIC Program Supports Breast Feeding - 130 Seward St., Suite 508 - Juneau, AK 99801		75-1248 919 804113	00063616
PARTICIPANT NAME - WIC ID# GRETTA GREEN 00089954		FIRST DATE TO USE 11/6/2013	LAST DATE TO USE 12/5/2013
QTY DESCRIPTION		Vendor must deposit within 60 days from the first date to use	
\$6.00	FRUIT or VEGETABLES, FRESH, FROZEN or CONTAINER		
XXX END OF ORDER XXX			
<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 4em; opacity: 0.5;">SAMPLE</div>		AMOUNT OF SALE	
		\$	
		WIC VENDOR STAMP	
<p>Vendor - Do not accept unless you have an Alaska WIC Contract: Not to Exceed \$200.00 To report WIC fraud, call (800) 451-9121, or visit <a href="http://www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm">www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm</a></p> <p>Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative</p>			
<p>00063616 09191248 804113</p>			

### *FVV Handling Process*

- 1) Check the valid dates on the FVV. You may accept an FVV only during the 30-day period printed on the face of the voucher. FVVs redeemed outside of the valid dates, before June 1<sup>st</sup> or after October 31<sup>st</sup> will be rejected by the bank.
- 2) Compare the signature of the participant or proxy with their WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. If a proxy is shopping for the participant, their signature must appear on the food list as one of the Authorized Representative/Proxy Signatures.
- 3) Write the actual amount of the sale in the amount box on the FVV. Then ask the participant or proxy to sign the FVV. Compare the signature to the signature on the customer's WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. Always write in the amount of the sale *before* the customer signs the FVV.
- 4) The total purchase price entered on the face of the FVV must never exceed the face value of the voucher.
- 5) Stamp your Farmer-Vendor number in the box marked "WIC Vendor Stamp". Handwritten or missing stamps will cause the coupon to be rejected. *Bank rejection fees will not be reimbursed under any circumstances.*
- 6) Deposit the FVV in your account within 60 days of the first valid date printed on the FVV. FVVs deposited outside of this time frame will *not* be reimbursed.

### **Understanding the Maximum Allowable Reimbursement**

Every WIC check has a maximum allowable reimbursement (MAR). For FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs, the value printed on the face of the coupon or voucher is the MAR, and the item will not be reimbursed for a higher amount than that value.

FVVs also have a "Not-to-Exceed" amount of \$200 printed on the check. That is a control for the State of Alaska to ensure that, if an error occurs and an amount over the MAR is accidentally accepted by the bank, an overage of more than \$200 will never be cleared by a banking institution.

Vendor staff regularly review redemption data and will establish a claim when a vendor is paid an amount over the MAR in error.

### **Preventing and Correcting FVV Errors**

FVVs are "pre-edited" (screened for errors) by the WIC check processor, Solutran, Inc. The coupons and vouchers are reimbursed if there are no errors. An error may be "non-fatal" (correctable); in this case it will be returned to you for correction. If the error is "fatal," the bank will reject the voucher and payment will be denied (see Table 2 for list of error types).



**Important Notes:** Your bank may charge you a returned check handling fee for each incorrectly deposited WIC FMNP coupon or FVV. Please make certain to check your coupons and vouchers for errors before you deposit them into your account. We strongly recommend that you submit FMNP and SFMNP coupons for reimbursement as you receive them; do not wait until the end of the season to make a bulk deposit. Banking issues are difficult to resolve after the farmers' market season has ended. Please remember that FVVs must be deposited no later than the 60<sup>th</sup> day after the first date to use.

### Wrong Sale Date or Amount

If the wrong "total amount of sale" or "date of sale" is written on an FVV, the following procedures must be followed to correct the error(s). Failure to follow these procedures will likely cause the FVV to be rejected by the bank:

- 1) Draw a **single line** through the incorrect amount or date to ensure that the incorrect amount or date remains readable.
- 2) Clearly write the correct amount or date next to the error (within or close to the box) in ink.
- 3) Mark your initials next to the correction.
- 4) Deposit the FVV in your bank, as usual.

### WIC Check Reconsideration

For Farmer-Vendors who believe a payment denial has been made incorrectly, or believe there is a justifiable reason why payment should be made, the State of Alaska WIC Program may consider payment approval with valid justification. A vendor must submit a WIC Check Appeal Request to the program within 30 days of rejection by the bank. A form and instructions for a WIC Check Appeal Request are included in Appendix E.

### Sample of a Corrected FVV:

**The Alaska WIC Program**  
Supports Breast Feeding - 130 Seward St., Suite 508 - Juneau, AK 99801

75-1248  
919  
804113

00063616

PARTICIPANT NAME - WIC ID# 00089954  
GRETTA GREEN

FIRST DATE TO USE 11/6/2013  
DATE OF SALE ~~12-1-13~~ 12-1-13  
LAST DATE TO USE 12/5/2013

Vendor must deposit within 60 days from the first date to use

QTY	DESCRIPTION
\$6.00	FRUIT or VEGETABLES, FRESH, FROZEN or CONTAINER
	XXX END OF ORDER XXX

AMOUNT OF SALE  
~~\$6.54~~  
\$6.00

WIC VENDOR STAMP  
9998

Vendor - Do not accept unless you have an Alaska WIC Contract: Not to Exceed \$200.00  
To report WIC fraud, call (800) 424-9121, or visit [www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm](http://www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm)

Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative

1100063616 109191248 804113



**Table 2: Common Banking Errors and Consequences**

Error	Result
Missing Farmer-Vendor stamp Illegible Farmer-Vendor number Invalid Farmer-Vendor number Amount encoded by your bank of deposit disagrees with amount entered on face of FVV (must be corrected through your bank).	<b>Non-fatal</b>  Bank will return the rejected FVV or FMNP coupon. Error <b>may be</b> corrected and the FMNP coupon or FVV may be deposited within valid dates.
Missing participant signature Deposited after date specified (stale-dated) Altered purchase price or sale date (if improperly corrected) Missing purchase price or date Altered or invalid signature or sale date	<b>Fatal</b>  Bank will return the rejected FVV or FMNP coupon. Error <b>may not</b> be corrected, and the FVV or FMNP coupon cannot be re-deposited at vendor's bank.

## I. WIC Program Responsibilities

The Alaska WIC Program will:

- Provide each eligible FMNP participant a one-time benefit of FMNP coupons totaling \$25 (in \$5 increments) that may be redeemed only at WIC authorized farmers' markets or farmstands between June 1 and October 31. Distribution of FMNP coupons will be made by program grantees.
- Provide each eligible Senior citizen participant SFMNP coupons totaling \$25 (in \$5 increments) that may be redeemed only at WIC authorized farmers' markets or farmstands between June 1 and October 31. Distribution of the SFMNP coupons will be made by local senior centers and nonprofit agencies approved by the State of Alaska WIC Program.
- Provide each eligible WIC participant monthly fruit and vegetable benefits that may be redeemed at WIC authorized farmers' markets, farms and/or farmstands between June 1 and October 31. Distribution of Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs) will be made by program grantees.
- Assure payments (to authorized farmers) of valid FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs.
- Provide training and technical assistance to farmers' market managers, farmers, and farmstands.

- Provide WIC Farmers' Market posters for the farmers and farmers' markets participating in the WIC FMNP and SFMNP.
- Deny payment to a farmer for improperly redeemed coupons and FVVs and/or demand repayment to the WIC Program.
- Provide monitoring of farmers' markets, farmers, and farmstands to assure compliance with 7 CFR 246 (WIC regulations), 7 CFR 248 (FMNP regulations) and 7 CFR 249 (SFMNP regulations).

## **J. Program Monitoring**

USDA regulations require State Agencies to monitor authorized vendors for compliance with the rules that are intended to ensure that federal funds allocated for FMNP and SFMNP are properly spent.

### **Monitoring Visits**

State and Local Agency staffs conduct regular on-site visits and monitoring of farmer-vendors and farmers' markets – both covertly and overtly. The goals are to:

- Ensure compliance with the program requirements,
- Provide technical assistance and support to farmer-vendors and market managers, and
- Conduct investigations of complaints, alleged violations, frauds, or illegal activity.

Farmer-vendors who fail to comply with the WIC, FMNP and SFMNP program requirements are subject to warning, sanctions (penalties), and/or disqualification depending on the extent, severity, and frequency of the violation.

### **Sanctions for Program Violations**

A farmer-vendor or market manager who commits fraud or abuse is subject to program sanctions, which may include repayment, fine, suspension, or disqualification from the program.

Violations are classified into four levels of noncompliance; Category I, Category II, Category III and Category IV. If a violation is documented, sanctions will be imposed.

See Table 3: FMNP Sanctions on next page.

**Table 3: FMNP Sanctions**

<b>Violation Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>State Agency Action/Penalty</b>
Category I	<p>Failure to display WIC Farmers' Market Poster.</p> <p>Accepting FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's for ineligible foods.</p> <p>Depositing or cashing FMNP/SFMNP coupons or vouchers without a valid farmer-vendor number stamped in the appropriate box. (First violation)</p> <p>Accepting an FVV without comparing their signature with their WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. (First violation)</p>	<p>Violation will result in verbal or written warning, with corrective action requested.</p> <p>Additional training may be provided on-site or by teleconference.</p>
Category II	<p>Accepting FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's before authorization is complete.</p> <p>Accepting FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's at an unauthorized farmers' market, or other unauthorized premises.</p> <p>Attempting to collect or collecting sales tax on produce sold to WIC and Senior participants (coupon or FVV portion only).</p> <p>Two or more Category I violations.</p>	<p>Violation will result in a written notification of noncompliance from the State Agency.</p> <p>The farmer-vendor may be required to participate in special training to resolve the violation.</p>
Category III	<p>Charging FMNP or SFMNP participants more than other customers.</p> <p>Discriminating actions against a WIC, FMNP or SFMNP participant.</p> <p>Providing money back to participants where the amount of the purchase is less than the coupon or voucher.</p> <p>Two or more Category II violations.</p>	<p>Violation will result in termination of Farmer-Vendor agreement and disqualification from the WIC, FMNP and/or SFMNP Program for one market season. Farmer-vendor will need to reapply for authorization after suspension.</p>
Category IV	<p>Committing fraud or abuse in connection with the FVV's, FMNP or SFMNP.</p> <p>Providing drugs, weapons, alcohol, or cash to a customer for coupons or FVV's.</p> <p>Two or more category III violations.</p>	<p>Violation will result in termination of Farmer-Vendor agreement and disqualification from the program. Farmer-Vendor may be required to repay the Alaska WIC Program for improperly redeemed coupons. Disqualification is for two years.</p>

## K. Problems or Complaints

A Farmer-Vendor, Farmers' Market Manager, WIC participant, FMNP or SFMNP participant may report a problem or register a complaint with the WIC Program. To report a problem, call the WIC Program at (907) 465-3100 during regular State of Alaska business hours. The State of Alaska WIC Program will work to resolve the problem and will provide notification when the issue has been resolved.

To file a written complaint, you may download a complaint form from the program website at <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/nutri/FMNP/FMNPOverview.htm>, or you may request a complaint form from the WIC Program by calling (907) 465-3100. A copy of the Complaint Form is included as Appendix F of this Handbook. The State of Alaska WIC Program will review your complaint, investigate as appropriate, and provide a written response.

## L. Discrimination Complaints

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## M. Administrative Appeals

The WIC Program will provide written notice of adverse action to be taken during the FMNP Farmer-Vendor or Farmers' Market agreement.

The State agency will provide Farmer-Vendors with not less than 30 days advance written notice by certified mail of adverse action to be taken during the course of the agreement performance period. Adverse action will be implemented after the 30 day advance notice period has elapsed. **No advance notice will be provided for a disqualification due to a conviction of trafficking or selling firearms or illegal substances in exchange for FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs.**

A Farmer Vendor may request an administrative appeal for the following:

- Denial of a Farmer-Vendor's, Farmers' Market Manager's, or a Farmstand Operator's application to become an authorized Farmer-Vendor.
- Termination of the Farmer's Agreement for cause,
- Imposition of a penalty, and/or
- Disqualification (except in case of a reciprocal WIC disqualification as a result of Food Stamp Program disqualification).

If the Farmer Vendor chooses to appeal the action, the Farmer Vendor must file a written Request for Administrative review within 30 days after notification of the adverse action to:

Department of Health and Social Services  
Director, Division of Public Assistance  
P.O. Box 110640  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

The request must include a statement setting forth the State agency action which the Farmer Vendor is contending and the reasons for appealing the action. Evidence supporting the vendor's statement should be included. Requests for Appeal will be reviewed, and hearings conducted, in accordance with the Administrative Review Process in Appendix H. The Farmer Vendor may be able to pursue judicial review of the agency's decision.

## N. Definitions

**AK DHSS** stands for Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. This is also sometimes referred to as the State Agency throughout this document.

**Compliance Buy** means a covert, on-site investigation in which a representative of WIC, FMNP and/or SFMNP poses as a participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy, transacts one or more food instruments (FIs) or FVVs, and does not reveal during the visit that he or she is a WIC, FMNP and/or SFMNP representative.

**Coupon** means a coupon, food instrument (FI), warrant, voucher, or other negotiable financial instrument by which benefits under the FVV, FMNP, and SFMNP are transferred to participants.

**Distribution Agency** means any nonprofit entity or local government agency which issues SFMNP coupons, and provides nutrition education and/or information on operational aspects of the Programs to eligible participants.

**Eligible Foods for purchase with Senior and Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons (SFMNP/FMNP)** means fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown, approved fruits, vegetables and herbs for human consumption. Eligible foods may not be processed or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes. Ineligible foods include dried fruits and vegetables, maple syrup, cider, juices, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat, cheese and seafood. Honey is approved only for purchase with SFMNP coupons.

**Eligible Foods for purchase with Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs)** means any combination of WIC approved fresh fruits and vegetables. They do not have to be grown in Alaska. This includes whole

or cut varieties. They may not have any added sugars, fats or oils. Ineligible foods for FVV purchase include edible blossoms or flowers, herbs, fruit leathers or fruit rollups, vegetable-grain or fruit-nut mixtures, dried fruits and vegetables, canned or dried mature legumes, honey, maple syrup, cider, juices, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat, cheese and seafood.

**Employee Fraud and Abuse** means the intentional conduct of a State, local agency or clinic employee which violates WIC Program, FMNP and/or SFMNP regulations, policies, or procedures, including, but not limited to, misappropriating or altering FIs or FVVs, entering false or misleading information in case records, or creating case records for fictitious participants.

**Farmer** means an individual authorized to sell eligible fruits, vegetables and herbs to participants at a farmers' market or farmstand. Individuals who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized to participate in WIC, FMNP and SFMNP. For purposes of this agreement, this includes the term "Farmer" as defined in WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), 7 C.F.R. § 248.2, and Seniors FMNP, 7 C.F.R. § 249.2, and in Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), 7 C.F.R. § 246.2.

**Farmers' Market** means an association of local farmers who assemble at a defined location and scheduled time for the purpose of selling their produce directly to consumers.

**Farmstand** means a location at which a single, individual farmer sells his/her produce directly to the consumer. This is in contrast to a group or association of farmers selling their produce at a farmers' market.

**FMNP** stands for Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

**Fruit and Vegetable Voucher (FVV)** means a fixed-dollar amount check, voucher, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card or other document which can be used only to obtain authorized fruits and vegetables.

**Local Agency** means any nonprofit entity or local government agency which issues FVV, FMNP or SFMNP coupons, and provides nutrition education and/or information on operational aspects of the Programs to eligible participants.

**Locally Grown** means produce grown only within Alaska borders. Under no circumstances can produce grown outside of Alaska be considered eligible for the FMNP and SFMNP.

**Participants** means pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants and children who are receiving supplemental foods or Food Instruments, including FVVs under the WIC Program and/or FMNP; and low income seniors age 60 or older, who are eligible to receive SFMNP benefits.

**Participant Violation** means any intentional action of a participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy that violates Federal or State statutes, regulations, policies, or procedures governing the WIC Program, FMNP, and SFMNP. Participant violations include intentionally making false or misleading statements or intentionally misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding facts to obtain benefits; exchanging FVVs, FIs or supplemental foods for cash, credit, non-food items, or unauthorized food items, including supplemental foods in excess of those listed on the participant's FI; threatening to harm or physically harming clinic, farmer or vendor staff; and dual participation.

**Proxy** means any person designated by a woman participant, or by a parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, to obtain and transact FIs or FVVs or to obtain supplemental foods on behalf of a participant. The proxy must be designated consistent with the State agency's procedures established pursuant to 7 CFR § 246.12 (r) (1). Parents or caretakers applying on behalf of child and infant participants are not proxies. For the SFMNP, "proxy" means an individual authorized by an eligible senior to act on the senior's behalf according to 7 CFR §249.2.

**Senior Participant** means eligible low-income seniors age 60 and over.

**SFMNP** stands for Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

**USDA** stands for United States Department of Agriculture.

**WIC** stands for Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.



## Farmers Market and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Handbook Appendices

Please visit <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/fmnp>  
for appendices or call (907) 465-8630 to request an  
emailed, faxed or mailed copy.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services  
Division of Public Assistance  
Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program  
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program  
130 Seward Street, Room 508  
Juneau, AK 99801  
Phone: (907) 465-3100  
Email: [wic@alaska.gov](mailto:wic@alaska.gov)